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# NEWS RELEASE

Release Number: 37

Release Date: April 24, 2006

## **New Budget Priorities, Facilities Standards Approved for California Trial Courts**

### ***Judicial Council Takes Action at Public Meeting***

San Francisco—Self-help programs for the millions of Californians who represent themselves in state courts will be one of the top budget priorities for state trial courts in fiscal year 2006-2007, the Judicial Council of California voted Friday.

At a public business meeting, the 28-member council also approved two other budget priorities for the trial courts: addressing staffing and operating costs for new courthouses and costs related to administrative services and technology initiatives.

The priorities reflect the major goals of the Judicial Council, chaired by Chief Justice Ronald M. George, and result from a new process that streamlines the court funding process.

These funding priorities will support programs that will help the public and courts in the following ways.

**Self-help programs:** Almost 6 million people represent themselves in the California courts each year. Self-help programs assist court users by facilitating their access to and understanding of the courts. This practice directly addresses a goal of the Judicial Council's long-term strategic plan—access, fairness, and diversity.

**Staffing and operating costs for new court facilities:** One of the Judicial Council's top priorities is to renovate and rebuild California courthouses, many of which are in a state of disrepair. As new courthouses are built, courts will need to fund basic operating costs and staffing.

**Administrative services and technology infrastructure:** A number of statewide administrative and technology initiatives are now being

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developed in the trial courts. These include the Court Accounting and Reporting System (CARS), the California Case Management System (CCMS), the Courts Human Resources Information System (CHRIS), the California Courts Technology Center (CCTC), and data integration, among others. These initiatives will help enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of court operations.

## **OTHER ACTIONS**

In other actions, the Judicial Council:

- Honored Chief Justice George for a decade of leadership and vision as chair of the Judicial Council, the administrative policymaking body of the state courts. The Chief Justice will celebrate his 10th year in office on May 1, 2006.
- Paid tribute to Mr. Michael Bergeisen, who is retiring as Deputy Administrative Director/General Counsel of the Administrative Office of the Courts after 11 years in that position.

In business-related matters the council:

- Approved revised standards for use in the design and construction of all new and renovated trial court facilities, effective immediately. The standards replace the *Trial Court Facility Guidelines* adopted in 2002.
- Approved amendments to the California Rules of Court concerning procedures for disqualifying court-appointed temporary judges and limitations on their use in certain situations. The amendments will implement several new provisions to the Code of Judicial Ethics concerning temporary judges being considered by the California Supreme Court and are subject to the adoption of those provisions.

The Judicial Council's meeting agenda and reports are available on the California Courts Web site at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/documents/age042106.pdf](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc/documents/age042106.pdf). An audiocast of the full council meeting is archived at [www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc](http://www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jc).

*The Judicial Council is the policymaking body of the California courts, the largest court system in the nation. Under the leadership of the Chief Justice and in accordance with the California Constitution, the council is responsible for ensuring the consistent, independent, impartial, and accessible administration of justice. The Administrative Office of the Courts carries out the official actions of the council and promotes leadership and excellence in court administration.*